

SALT II

Turner raises fresh concerns over verification

IF PRESIDENT Carter wonders at mounting public apprehension about a new strategic arms-limitation treaty (SALT II) with the Soviet Union, he would do well to ponder the startlingly conflicting information the nation is likely to use to form its attitudes.

Take, as only one example, the role of U.S. intelligence-gathering bases in Northern Iran.

These bases, constructed at immense cost to American taxpayers, were only 600 miles from the Soviet Union's principal missile-test range, and the sophisticated equipment with which they were outfitted gave U.S. strategic planners the best available data on the scope and nature of Soviet missilery.

The downfall of the Shah of Iran and the creation of an Islamic republic in his place deprived the United States of access to those bases. They may also have put the equipment itself in hostile hands.

At his January 17 news conference, the President dismissed the loss of those intelligence-gathering installations so lightly that many Americans must have wondered why the United States went to the trouble and expense of establishing and maintaining them.

"I can assure the public, and the Congress," Mr. Carter said, "that no matter what happens to the specific intelligence sources in Iran, we can adequately compensate for their change and provide adequate verification for compliance by

the Soviet Union with SALT agreements."

Last week, however, an altogether different story has come to light: Adm. Stansfield Turner, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, has told the Senate Intelligence Committee that it will take *five years* for the United States to restore the intelligence capability lost with the shah's downfall. In five years, the SALT II treaty would have expired.

Sensing the impact of Admiral Turner's admission, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown rushed to the fore with an estimate midway between the President's and the CIA's.

Admiral Turner's assertion is, of course, of prime concern to Ohio's Sen. John H. Glenn Jr. (D), who has argued all along that an adequate verification framework is indispensable to his support of a new SALT accord.

Senator Glenn has gone so far as to advise the White House that the United States must replace the Iranian capability *before* a SALT treaty is even submitted to the Senate for ratification. If it is not, Senator Glenn seems to be implying, he will oppose ratification. And so, from all indications, will a significant number of other lawmakers.

Mr. Carter himself has called adequate verification procedures a key to a workable SALT treaty. But the administration itself has muddled the waters on how far away adequate verification actually is.

One is tempted to suspect that Mr. Carter is so keen upon a SALT II as a capstone to his career as the universal peacemaker that he is willing to delude even himself.

For an administration committed to openness and candor, the performance is, to be charitable, baffling.